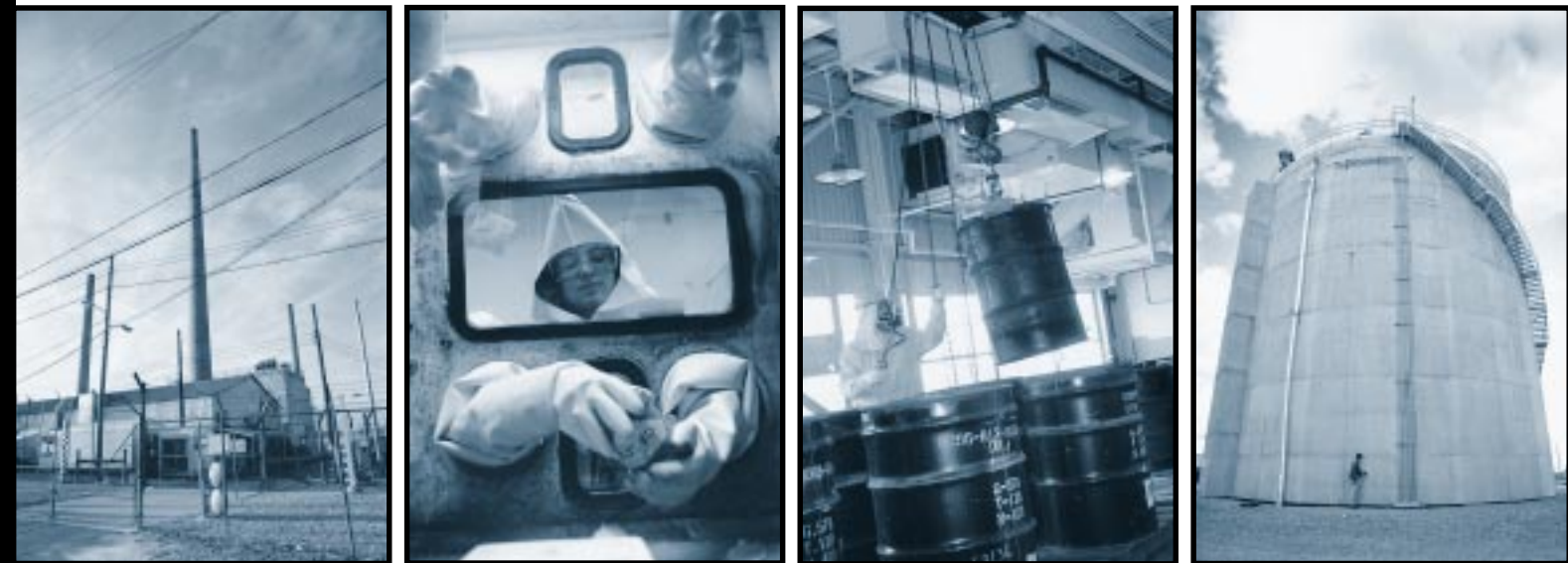


Closing the Circle on the Splitting of the Atom

The Environmental Legacy
of Nuclear Weapons Production
in the United States
and What the Department of Energy
is Doing About It

This book describes existing environmental, safety, and health problems throughout the nuclear weapons complex, and what the Department of Energy is doing to address them. Because of the secrecy that until recently surrounded nuclear weapons production, many citizens today are unaware how and where nuclear weapons were made or the resulting environmental problems. Yet a broad public awareness is precisely what is needed now in order to address the many issues concerning the environmental legacy of the Cold War. The aim of this book is to foster deeper public understanding to help hasten progress as the Department moves ahead on resolving these problems. In the midst of the complexities and uncertainties of such a challenge, one thing is clear: the task demands a similar – if not greater – level of commitment, intelligence, and ingenuity than was required by the Manhattan Project.



The U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Environmental Management

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Chapter I is an overview and a summary. To give the reader some perspective, it includes a brief history of the Department's nuclear weapons complex. **Chapter II** describes nuclear warhead production from uranium mining to final assembly to give a sense of the scale and complexity of nuclear weapons production and to characterize the sources and varieties of wastes and contamination. **Chapters III and IV** look at the wastes and contamination left by the Cold War. They describe the plans and the progress being made towards solving these problems. **Chapter V** provides an international perspective on the legacy of nuclear weapons production. **Chapter VI** describes the engineering and institutional challenges faced by the Department of Energy as it embarks on new missions. **Chapter VII** presents some of the long-term issues our nation faces as we come to terms with the legacy of the Cold War. The book ends with a glossary of terms and a list of books and reports that provide additional information about the nuclear weapons complex and the Department's plans for its cleanup.

This book was produced by the Environmental Management's Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis, with the assistance of hundreds of people in Environmental Management and in other offices of the Department of Energy, contractors, and others.

All of the photographs in this book have been taken by Robert Del Tredici, except for those on pages 20, 40, 42, 54, 59 (items 5,6,7,8,10, and 11), 68-71, and 75. The photograph on page 75 is courtesy of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

For more information about obtaining copies of this book or about the environmental management activities of the U.S. Department of Energy, call the Environmental Management Information Center at:

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*Office of Environmental Management,
Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis (EM-4),
U.S. Department of Energy,
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, DC 20585
Telephone: (202) 586-9280*

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